



NIO 729-74

DATE: 12 April 1974

TO: The Director

SUBJECT: Comments on Washington Post
Article

1. This morning you asked for comments on the attached article from the Washington Post. Comments are attached.

2. I would add two observations:

a. The reporter, Richard Homan, has a good reputation for reporting accuracy among former members of the negotiating team. Die Presse also has a reputation for good access to both Eastern and Western delegations.

3. As noted in the comment, the proposal would engage the Western Europeans in reduction process.

25X1

George A. Carver, Jr.
D/DCI/NIO

Attachments

GAC Chrono ✓

Soviet Plan on Troop Cuts

By Richard Homan
Special to The Washington Post

VIENNA, April 12 — The Soviet Union is preparing a compromise proposal for the East-West force reduction talks that it hopes will bridge the wide gap between the present NATO and Warsaw Pact positions and lead to an early initial step in lowering troop levels in Central Europe, a Vienna newspaper reported today.

The report, published by Die Presse, one of Austria's most respected newspapers, was attributed to "conference circles," and could not immediately be confirmed here. Negotiators from most of the 19 nations taking part in the talks have already left Vienna for a four-week Easter recess.

A spokesman for the Western allies said, however, that the compromise proposal would probably be unacceptable to NATO because the West did not intend to alter its position in the slightest.

"Our position is undeviating," the Western spokesman said.

The proposal, according to the newspaper report, is to be presented shortly after the talks resume here in the second week of May and its key features were developed as a

result of small informal discussions between unspecified negotiators.

NATO officials have contended publicly throughout the talks that matters of substance are dealt with only at the twice-weekly formal negotiating sessions at which all delegations are present. One aim of this contention is to prevent charges by smaller nations that the United States and the Soviet Union by themselves are negotiating an agreement.

The compromise proposal reportedly would take small steps toward meeting two key Western demands: that the Warsaw Pact must reduce its forces by greater numbers than the West because of its current numerical advantage, and that air forces and nuclear weapons must not be included in the reductions.

Under the Warsaw Pact's original proposal, presented last November, each side would reduce its Central European forces by 20,000 in the first phase, with equal percentage reductions in later phases. Forces of all nations would be involved from the start, as would air forces and nuclear arms.

NATO's counter-proposal, offered two weeks later, called for 15 per cent reductions of

U.S. and Soviet ground forces in the area, with both sides reducing their ground forces to a ceiling of 700,000 each in the second phase.

In the reported compromise proposal, the Warsaw Pact would drop its request for equal 20,000-man reductions on both sides, calling instead for "symbolic" first-step cuts of about one per cent in the forces of all the nations involved. This would have the additional effect of freezing the overall troop strengths. Moscow would also, according to the report, drop its insistence that air forces and nuclear weapons be included in the reductions, if the West were willing to make an oral acknowledgment that such reductions are necessary.

The one per cent reductions, based on current NATO estimates of troop strengths in Central Europe, would remove only 7,770 of NATO's 777,000 troops and 9,250 of the Warsaw Pact's 925,000, thereby doing little to reduce the East's 150,000-man advantage—a chief objection of the West.

A Western source said today that the reported proposal had not come to NATO's attention, except through the newspaper account, and that, as described, it had "many holes." He said NATO would continue to

firmly insist that only Soviet and U.S. troops be cut in the first phase, and it would continue to oppose any "symbolic" cuts affecting only a few thousand troops.

"Our position is that symbolic cut would only perpetuate the existing imbalance," he said.

Western observers speculated, however, that whether or not the reported proposal was authentic, something in the nature of a compromise offer would likely develop from the Warsaw Pact summit meeting that is to take place in Warsaw next week.

Comment on Post Article on MBFR

There is no confirmation that the Soviets are preparing to introduce formally a proposal like that reported in today's Post.

25X1

The Die

Presse story, on which the Post article draws, may represent a Soviet effort to bring public pressure to bear on the West Europeans.

the Soviets have been trying to win Western acceptance of a "symbolic" reduction. Originally

SECRET

The Post article partially misconstrues the Die Presse account (attached). It is clear from the latter that the one percent reference applies to the reduction of West European forces. A more substantial reduction of US and Soviet forces would also be involved.

25X1

[REDACTED]

Even a one percent reduction of national forces might be considered by Moscow to meet that commitment.

25X1

[REDACTED]

The purported new proposal, and all variants of the symbolic reduction, have had the basic purpose of engaging the Western Europeans in the reduction process. The Soviets have waged a heavy media campaign toward this end and have not been above using press leaks at the Vienna negotiations. The Die Presse story seems to fit in this category.

SECRET